

Remarks on the liar paradox

著者	Kanno Kenji
journal or publication title	Tsukuba English Studies
volume	10
page range	293-295
year	1991-08-31
URL	http://hdl.handle.net/2241/7608

Remarks on the Liar Paradox*

Kenji Kanno

The aim of this short communication "Remarks on the Liar Paradox" is to consider the so-called Liar Paradox from the following two points of view. On one hand, liars cannot say, "I'm a liar," whereas, on the other hand, those who are not liars can say, "I am a liar" in a certain context.

Now, my abstract is on page 275 of Abstracts of Short Communications.

KANNO, Kenji, College of Arts and Sciences, Chiba University, 1-33 Yayoi-cho, Chiba-shi, Chiba-ken, 260 Japan. - Remarks on the Liar Paradox -

No one says, "I am a liar," but everyone says, "I am not a liar." If one is a liar, he/she says, "I am not a liar" because he/she lies; and if one is not a liar, he/she says, "I am not a liar" because he/she does not lie --- hence the liar paradox.

.Then, cannot "I am a liar" be said in any case? The answer is YES, as in (1).

- (1) A speaker who is no liar can say, "I am a liar on April first," on days other than April first.

If the speaker in question is a liar, he/she never says, "I am a liar." The speaker, even if he/she is not a liar, can tell a lie on April first, so the speaker can say, "I am a liar on April first," on days other than April first, when the speaker says, "I am not a liar," in a "true" liar's way.

By the way, as for the first viewpoint, namely that liars cannot say, "I am a liar," this point has much to do with the nature of a lie. If liars say, "I am a liar," such liars can no longer be liars because they do not tell a lie. Benjamin (1987) "The Pragmatics of Eristic" A Paper for the 1987 International Pragmatics Conference, University of Antwerp, for example,

proposes the following condition as one of the seven conditions on a lie.

Intentional Condition: The Liar must believe other than X while seeking to get the hearer to believe X.

When liars say, "I am a liar," the liars do not satisfy the Intentional Condition at all because the liars get the hearer to believe what the liars believe, not what the liars do not believe.

Next, as for the second viewpoint, in other words, that those who are not liars can say, "I am a liar" in a certain context, the statement "I am a liar" should be changed into the statement "I am a liar on April first" because socially we may tell a lie on April first, namely April Fools' Day or All Fools' Day. In fact, I wrote this short communication abstract of mine on April first in 1990 because of the deadline and so I am afraid it might be a lie. But, and this is a very big but, the statement "I am a liar on April first" must not be said on the very day, namely April first, when the speakers can be liars. On April first, whether speakers are liars or not, the speakers say, "I am not a liar" either in a liar's way or a non-liar's way. On days other than April first, only those who are not liars can say, "I am a liar on April first."

To sum up, although the context is restricted, "I am a liar" can be said by those who are not liars.

Finally, I would like to touch upon a liar saying, "I am a liar." As I said before, if a liar says, "I am a liar," there is a contradiction between being a liar on one hand and not telling a lie on the other hand. In spite of this contradiction, I point out the following two possibilities. One is that at least once a liar who says, "I am a liar" does not tell a lie though this statement "I am a liar" is very crucial. Another is that a liar saying, "I am a liar" might tell a lie which is different from a usual lie. These two possibilities themselves and whether there exists a third possibility or not await future study.

NOTES

* This is a slightly revised version of my short communication delivered at the 21st International Congress of Mathematicians in Kyoto, August 21-29, 1990.

I express my gratitude to Shinsuke Homma and Hideo Takahashi, without whom I could not publish this paper.

REFERENCES

Benjamin, J. 1987. "The Pragmatics of Eristic." A Paper for the 1987 International Pragmatics Conference, University of Antwerp.

College of Arts and Sciences
Chiba University